

Personal Response Writing:
A writer's guideline

Remember that the purpose of personal response writing (at least on an exam), is to assess your level of critical thinking and literacy.

A solid grounding in the two highest levels of literacy (text-self and text-society) should be made evident. The purpose of these questions is to assess your understanding of a text from its basic literal and figurative meaning; to indicate your ability to link a text to your own life (text -self), and also in its relation to the context of wider aspects of society (text-society).

- This is the ONLY opportunity you will have on an exam to write using the FIRST PERSON (I think, I believe, in my experience, etc.). Revel in it!

A typical personal response question will give a statement, such as:

In a well-developed format, write a personal argument in which you agree or disagree with this statement:

“The mind is everything; what you think, you become.” --- The Buddha

Consider how you may wish to organize your response. Here's one suggestion:

Paragraph 1 (The prompt in your own words = Text)

- **Restate the quotation/prompt** in its original form.
- **Outline/Define ‘tangly’ words** that may have not have the same meaning or connotation for all people. (Ex. the *mind*; to *think*; to *become*). What do these words mean to you?
- **Restate the quote again, in your own words. State whether you agree or disagree**
- **Outline** (briefly) **what will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow**. (Ex. An personal experience about my test anxiety and a news article about an isolated, rural town)

Paragraph 2 (Text - Self)

- **Describe (in detail) an experience where the lesson of the quote/prompt was learned**. (Ex. an experience describing a moment where your thoughts of worry and test anxiety kept you from your sleep and made you unable to concentrate, thereby hindering you from your success on a test)

Paragraph 3 (Text - Society)

- **Connect the lesson of the quote to a specific event in society**. (Ex. When people of a community believe they can maximize an opportunity to grow the economy of their fledgling town, pretty soon, word gets around that the town is filled with friendly people and lovely scenery; a great vacation getaway. Pretty soon, they're seeing a booming tourist economy.
- **Consider the implications/long term effects of the belief in the quote**. (How can such an attitude have positive and negative effects on individuals, groups, and society as a whole?)
- **Conclude with some rhetorical questions**: “Why do so many people dwell on the negative aspects in life?”; “What can be done to help those who feel such cynicism?”, “Can a shift in attitude change the world?”